

priority of fire, and other available assets to weight the main effort, but this is difficult once the fighting begins. The original concept changes, and the commander now needs to shift the main effort. He has already task organized his forces and can't reallocate them now that he is in contact. He has already positioned his reserve so it will be responsive to his original main effort, and a foot-mobile reserve may have a hard time moving to support the new main effort in time.

*Priority of fires* sounds impressive, but it is a relatively insignificant means of weighting the main effort. All it means is that if two units call for fire at the same time, the unit with priority gets its mission fired first. As the main effort is shifted to the unit in contact (and if the other units are not in contact), there is little competition for fires anyway. This technique offers less concentration than the decisive point tech-

nique, but considerably more than the 27 squads technique.

The only area in which the decisive point technique is not clearly superior is in the potential for a secure MSR. In this area, the decisive point technique consciously ignores terrain to focus on the enemy. As General Sherman did in cutting loose from his lines of communication to get to Atlanta, the decisive point technique favors speed in reaching the objective over a methodical advance. We feel this trade-off is worthwhile, especially since casualty evacuation and resupply will be easier with the entire unit in roughly the same location.

The spectrum of search and attack techniques is based on a thorough analysis of the intelligence available in a particular situation. A thorough, detailed analysis gives the commander the flexibility he needs to use in finding, fixing, and finishing the enemy.

If the necessary information is not available to conduct this detailed analysis, the commander must focus his attention upon gaining that information. Without it and the resulting analysis, his orders will be based on assumptions instead of facts.

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# Back to Basics

## Training Close Combat Skills

LIEUTENANT COLONEL THOMAS A. DEMPSEY

Before I was assigned to command a Basic Combat Training (BCT) battalion at Fort Knox, I served as executive officer of an infantry battalion during a rotation at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC). This sequence of assignments helped me realize the special benefits of BCT, not only in terms of the training the soldiers receive but also in terms of the skills cadre members take with them when they return to line units.

During the JRTC rotation, my battalion made mistakes and took a lot of casualties at the hands of one of the deadliest light infantry forces in the

world today—the JRTC's opposing force (OPFOR)—which we were encountering for the first time.

In the after-action review (AAR) that followed that battle, we got some unpleasant surprises. The OPFOR, which we had estimated at a company (minus), turned out to be less than a platoon. Nevertheless, it had succeeded in destroying an entire rifle company in a series of disjointed, squad-on-squad fire fights, while suffering only minimal losses from our infantry. All in all, it had not been a good day for us.

While the battalion would learn from that engagement and eventually locate

and destroy almost the entire OPFOR company, the memory of that first experience remained a sobering one. It became evident during the AAR that the soldiers of the OPFOR had won their fire fights for some simple reasons: They had out-shot us, consistently scoring first-round hits with M16 MILES (multiple integrated laser engagement system) at ranges of 100 to 200 meters. They had also been far more effective in using individual movement techniques and executing battle drills at the buddy team, fire team, and squad levels.

Following this rotation, I spent a great deal of time thinking about the best way

fire teams and squads, confronting the difficulties and hazards of maneuvering two separate elements against a hostile force. Most soldiers serve at least once as team leaders, learning basic leadership skills that even junior enlisted soldiers may be called upon to exercise in combat. It is easy to see the improvement in combat skills as the squads move through the various lanes. By the end of the last lane, the soldiers have reached a level of proficiency that will sustain them through their first taste of combat, where the most casualties normally occur.

In the context of the overall BCT POI and mission training plans, the training environment at Fort Knox also offers unique opportunities to young infantry leaders. Company commanders and XO's, in particular, benefit from the warfighting focus and the commitment to excellence.

There are virtually no training distrac-

tions for these officers to deal with. Their single overriding priority is to graduate qualified soldiers, and all of the resources are focused in that direction. The officers can plan training in detail two to three months ahead, and then execute the plan with few changes.

BCT is an intensely satisfying environment, both personally and professionally, especially for infantry captains and senior lieutenants. In only eight weeks, a BCT company commander and XO take 200 new and completely untrained soldiers from zero proficiency all the way to sustainment training level in individual combat skills and infantry small-unit collective tasks. Consider, then, the level of proficiency that can be achieved and sustained by applying some of the same techniques in a rifle company, with experienced soldiers who already have a strong base of skill and professional knowledge to build upon.

In summary, any infantry lieutenant or captain who masters the challenges of training the Army's new soldiers is well prepared for the similar task of training the soldiers in infantry line units to win the close fight, whether it is fought with MILES bullets at a combat training center or with real bullets in the streets of a city such as Mogadishu.

BCT is a training environment tailor-made for honing the skills of infantry captains and senior lieutenants in preparation for returning to infantry line units.

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# The Infantry OSUT FTX

**CAPTAIN GARY M. BRITO**

The soldiers undergoing infantry one-station unit training (OSUT) at Fort Benning participate in a field training exercise (FTX), usually during the twelfth week of the 13-week cycle. The purpose of this FTX is to give the soldiers an opportunity to improve their individual and crew tasks in the context of squad-level collective tasks and help them make the transition to the training they will receive in their units. The FTX, the culminating point of the training, also serves as a final assessment of the soldiers, is the culmination of training, and helps maintain the cadre's infantry skills.

During the FTX, the soldiers are trained in MOSs 11B (Infantryman), 11C (Indirect Fire Infantryman), and

11H (Heavy Antiarmor Weapons Infantryman). The soldiers in MOS 11M (Fighting Vehicle Infantryman) are trained in 11B skills during the FTX and then receive two weeks of mechanized infantry training after the thirteenth week.

Although OSUT company commanders have considerable flexibility in the design of the FTX for their soldiers, one technique is to conduct three or four squad tactical exercise lanes that draw out the required individual skills of all infantrymen. These skills either coincide with or overlap the combat critical tasks the Infantry Training Brigade considers important. The individual skills involved in each collective task are taken from ARTEP 7-8 MTP, *Mission*

*Training Plan (MTP) for Infantry Platoon and Squad*; from ARTEP 7-90 MTP, *Mission Training Plan for the Infantry Mortar Platoon, Section, and Squad*; and from ARTEP 7-91 Drill, *Drills for the Antiarmor (TOW) Platoon, Section, and Squad*.

A company commander chooses the individual tasks for the FTX on the basis of his assessment of the soldiers' performance. The drill sergeants normally gather this information for him, as they track soldiers' performance during the cycle. Since the soldiers train and test on skill level one individual tasks throughout the cycle, the drill sergeants have several opportunities to assess their soldiers on each of these tasks. By the time the FTX is prepared, they have a